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at all open to objection, it is perhaps the devoting of so much space to an investigation of charges made against his father's fame by an unprincipled adventurer. We need not say, that the vindication is triumphant: the integrity of Mr. Jay is beyond the reach of such accusers. The author has, however, without transgressing in any respect the limits prescribed by propriety, in treating of the merits of a relative, done ample justice to the memory of a man of eminent ability and virtue.

ART. III.—Homer.

1. *Introduction to the Study of the Greek Classic Poets. Designed principally for the Use of Young Persons at School and College.* By HENRY NELSON COLERIDGE, Esq., M. A., late Fellow of Kings College, Cambridge. Part I. Containing I. General Introduction. II. Homer. Philadelphia. 1831.
2. *Prolegomena ad Homerum, sive de Operum Homericorum prisca et genuina forma variisque mutationibus et probabili ratione emendandi.* Frid. Aug. Wolfius. Vol. I. Halis Sax. 1785.
3. *Prolegomena ad Homerum, sive de Carminum Homericorum origine, auctore, et aetate, &c.* Scripsit Rich. Payne Knight. Lipsiae. 1816.
4. ὍΜΗΡΟΥ ἸΛΙΑΣ. *The Iliad of Homer from the text of Wolf, with English Notes and Flaxman's illustrative Designs.* Edited by C. C. FELTON, College Professor of Greek in Harvard University. 8vo. Boston and Cambridge. 1833.

THE book which stands first at the head of this article is the first of a series, designed, as the author professes, to enable the youthful student to form a just and liberal judgment of the characters and merits of the Greek poets; and with that view to establish in his mind those principles of literary criticism, which are universal in their application to poetry, whether ancient or modern. We hail with satisfaction any attempt of the kind, at this time especially, when attention to classical studies is reviving among us; and we are free to express our

persuasion, that Mr. Coleridge has rendered a valuable service to the cause of classical literature. Not that the views or investigations contained in this volume are in general novel. They are such as a faithful, assiduous instructor in our higher institutions ought to give his pupils. But there is much in the work, which is beyond the reach of most of our students. The common learning on the subject is well digested, and pursued sufficiently into detail for the purposes of the general reader, who does not need, and is not able to go to original sources ; and the critical views exhibited show, that Mr. Coleridge is himself thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the classical poets, which he would infuse into the minds of others. This work supplies a *desideratum* in the apparatus to which pupils have had access. It does not repel by a parade of learning ; while the taste and poetic feeling which it indicates, and the spirit with which it is animated, make it in a high degree attractive. However full and valuable may be the instruction which the pupil enjoys, such a work will be highly useful, as a guide in his private studies, or as an auxiliary in reviewing the ground over which he has already passed.

This volume, after an Introduction of a general character, is devoted to the poems ascribed to Homer. Its various topics are arranged under the following heads ; the History of the Origin and Preservation of the Iliad, the Iliad, Odyssey, Margites, Batrachomyomachia, Hymns, Epigrams, and Fragments. The reader is thus presented with a body of criticism and information on the Homeric poems, which it would cost him great labor and extensive research to obtain from other sources. In the Introduction the student will find, besides many valuable remarks of a desultory character, a few general principles, which will render him important assistance in forming a judgment of the merits of the ancient classics. The estimate which the author gives of the merits of Homer strikes us as just. Although ardent admirers of the ancient bard, we cannot charge him with extravagance. His opinions are manifestly the result of patient study and reflection, guided by good taste and judgment, and animated by the spirit of true poetry. We cannot more effectually recommend the labors of Mr. Coleridge, than by referring our readers to the concluding passage of his general Introduction, as affording a favorable specimen of the warmth and animation which pervade his work.

‘I am not one who has grown old in literary retirement, devoted to classical studies with an exclusiveness which might lead to an overweening estimate of these two noble languages, (the Greek and Latin.) Few, I will not say evil, were the days allowed to me for such pursuits; and I was constrained, still young and an unripe scholar, to forego them for the duties of an active and laborious profession. They are now amusements only, however delightful and improving. Far am I from assuming to understand all their riches, all their beauty, or all their power; yet I can profoundly feel their immeasurable superiority to all we call modern; and I would fain think that there are many, even among my young readers, who can now, or will hereafter, sympathize with the expression of my ardent admiration.

‘Greek,—the shrine of the genius of the old world; as universal as our race, as individual as ourselves; of infinite flexibility, of indefatigable strength, with the complication and distinctness of nature herself; to which nothing was vulgar, from which nothing was excluded; speaking to the ear like Italian, speaking to the mind like English; with words like pictures, with words like the gossamer film of the summer; at once the variety and picturesqueness of Homer, the gloom and the intensity of *Æschylus*; not compressed to the closest by *Thucydides*, not fathomed to the bottom by *Plato*, not sounding with all its thunders, nor lit up with all its ardors, even under the Promethean touch of *Demosthenes*! And Latin,—the voice of empire and of war, of law and of the state; inferior to its half-parent and rival in the embodying of passion and in the distinguishing of thought, but equal to it in sustaining the measured march of history, and superior to it in the indignant declamation of moral satire; stamped with the mark of an imperial and despotising republic; rigid in its construction, parsimonious in its synonymes; reluctantly yielding to the flowery yoke of *Horace*, although opening glimpses of Greek-like splendor in the occasional inspirations of *Lucretius*; proved, indeed, to the uttermost by *Cicero*, and by *him* found wanting; yet majestic in its barrenness, impressive in its conciseness; the true language of History, instinct with the spirit of nations, and not with the passions of individuals; breathing the maxims of the world, and not the tenets of the schools; one and uniform in its air and spirit, whether touched by the stern and haughty *Sallust*, by the open and discursive *Livy*, or by the reserved and thoughtful *Tacitus*.

‘These inestimable advantages, which no modern skill can wholly counterpoise, are known and felt by the scholar alone.

He has not failed, in the sweet and silent studies of his youth, to drink deep at those sacred fountains of all that is just and beautiful in human language. The thoughts and the words of the master-spirits of Greece and Rome are inseparably blended in his memory ; a sense of their marvellous harmonies, their exquisite fitness, their consummate polish, has sunken forever in his heart, and thence throws out light and fragraney upon the gloom and the annoyances of his maturer years. No avocations of professional labor will make him abandon their wholesome study ; in the midst of a thousand cares he will find an hour to recur to his boyish lessons, to re-peruse them in the pleasurable consciousness of old associations, and in the clearness of manly judgment, and to apply them to himself and to the world with superior profit. The more extended his sphere of learning in the literature of modern Europe, the more deeply, though the more wisely, will he reverence that of classical antiquity ; and in declining age, he will retire, as it were, within a circle of his school-fellow friends, and end his studies, as he began them, with his Homer, his Horace and his Shakspeare.'

We shall now avail ourselves of the opportunity which Mr. Coleridge has given us, to exhibit to our readers a brief view of the history and merits of the curious and difficult question, respecting the genuineness of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ; a question, which has enlisted the most labored efforts of the best German and English critics. Our limits and the character of our Journal will not allow a minute discussion, in any of its parts, of a subject which involves the most difficult points in historical criticism, as well as many topics in which the general reader is not likely to feel much interest. We hope, however, to be able to give a satisfactory view of it, without encumbering our discussion with a formidable array of antiquarian lore.

By the genuineness of these poems, we mean, that they were the productions of the individual whose name they bear ; that we have them substantially as they came from him. We say substantially, because no one maintains, that they have not suffered in some measure from the various sources of corruption to which these, far more than any other of the ancient classics, were exposed.

The history of this question affords a striking proof, that historical criticism, as a science, is recent in its origin. The

Iliad and *Odyssey* had been admired for ages, as splendid monuments of human genius, and as models of epic composition, without a suspicion in the generality of readers that they were not the productions of the bard whose name they bear, although a slight investigation is sufficient to convince any one, that we know nothing with certainty of his origin and life, and that of his age these poems are the only remains. Critics indeed have often expressed their surprise, that in an age, which exhibits no other traces of recorded literature, an individual should have arisen, who, without rules to guide or models to imitate, produced by his own unaided efforts what admiring ages have pronounced to be models in a species of composition, which, in the subsequent progress of the human mind, three or four only have attempted with entire success. The extraordinary nature of the supposition had not, however, suggested to their minds any serious doubts of its truth, (for the doubts which have been entertained respecting the authority of particular passages, or even of whole cantos, form no material exception to our statement,) and until a recent period the persuasion has been general, that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were the creations of one mind, and have come down to us with as few mutilations as, in the nature of the case, was possible.

We speak of the views respecting these poems entertained by the generality of readers. A few isolated instances may be mentioned of those who doubted their genuineness, even among the critics of antiquity, though none went to the length of the modern school. Before the age of the Alexandrian critics, there was a class who maintained, that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were the productions of different authors. Among the moderns two may be named, who seem to have been highly skeptical on this point, Casaubon and Bentley. Their opinions, however, are but casually introduced in their writings,—by the latter but once,—and excited little attention. The passage in which Bentley expresses his views is found in one of his works written in reply to Collins. We quote it as entitled to respect from the reputation of its author, and as remarkable for the period when it was written. ‘Homer wrote a sequel of songs and rhapsodies, to be sung by himself for small earnings, and good cheer at festivals and other days of merriment. These loose songs were not collected together in the form of an epic poem, till about five hundred years

after.' It is remarkable, that this passage, coming as it did from the Coryphaeus of English, indeed of European critics, did not excite more attention. Perhaps, the circumstance that it occurs in a work of theological controversy, and not in one of professed criticism, may in part explain the fact.

A few years before Bentley threw out this view of these poems, opinions were advanced respecting their merits and their genuineness, which were so manifestly the offspring of passion and prejudice, that they made no permanent impression. We refer to those which were elicited by the controversy respecting the comparative merits of the ancients and moderns, in which the names of Perrault and Hedelin, (the Abbé d'Aubignac) were conspicuous; the former of whom affected to regard the poems of Homer as inferior even to the worthless productions of some of his own contemporaries, and the latter went so far as to deny that such a poet ever existed.

The discussions, to which these angry invectives against the classics gave rise, were confined chiefly to their merits. The way was first prepared for a thorough investigation of the subject before us, by Wood, in his *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer*, published in 1769; in which he investigates the question, whether Homer committed his poems to writing, and maintains the negative with much learning and acumen. The appearance of this essay excited great attention and opened a new field of inquiry. Heyne, in his *Excursus* on the last book of the *Iliad*, discussed the question of its genuineness at considerable length, with ample learning, and at the same time with a spirit which commends itself to his readers. The result of his inquiries seems, (for he expresses himself with caution) to be as follows; that the *Iliad* was not the conception of a single mind; that several distinct poems or rhapsodies, founded on the same general subject, were recited by rhapsodists, as they were termed, and were collected and wrought into an epic poem by the genius and labor of one or more individuals of a later and more refined age, which he supposes to have been that of the Pisistratidae. The opinion of Heyne, it will be perceived, differs from that of Bentley. The latter ascribed the 'loose songs' to Homer himself, while Heyne, although he does not express himself with perfect clearness on this point, was yet evidently inclined to adopt the supposition, that they were a collection of the poems of different authors.

‘Let that illustrious genius,’ says he, ‘be to us a Homer, to whom we are indebted for this union of different poems, made with such wonderful skill. I will claim for him a share of the inspiration of the ancient bards.’*

But of all who have investigated this intricate subject, Wolf is pre-eminent. To him is due the credit of assailing, with vast learning and research, and with great effect, opinions which were sanctioned by an antiquity reaching to the dawn of authentic history. Though his reputation in this country, we apprehend, is more that of a fearless adventurer in criticism, an ardent, headstrong innovator, than that of a judicious critic, his *Prolegomena*, (of which unfortunately the first volume only has ever appeared) sufficiently attest the thoroughness of his investigations, and the patience with which they were conducted. The spirit in which he pursued his inquiries, and the caution with which he adopted conclusions so much at variance with long established opinions, may be learned from his own statement.

‘The die has been cast, and not without preparation on my part. Two individuals of great learning are yet living, who perhaps remember the views on this subject which I expressed to them in 1780 and 1781, both in conversation and by letter. Since that time, having been occupied by other cares, I have rarely suffered a word to escape me, which might disturb the silence or oppose the fixed opinions of the learned. Even in my lectures, for many years, I have followed the example of the expounders of religious doctrines, who from fear of public edicts do not teach what they themselves believe, but what has been prescribed from ancient times; nor have I publicly advanced any of my doubts. I have frequently laid aside and destroyed all notes which I had made of such doubts, to see if, after they had escaped from my memory, a renewed examination of the subject at a subsequent period would remove them. Once indeed I was ashamed, and tired of my way or rather of my wanderings, after reading Perrault’s comparison of the ancients and moderns, where he states that a work similar to his own had been written by one of his countrymen, which would soon be given to the world. Soon after, I obtained the work which he announced, in which, with other things of the same character, the writer denies that Homer ever existed, and asserts that each of his poems

* Excursus II. § 4. ad Lib. 24. II.

was composed from the tragedies and songs of beggars and hawkers in the highways, like those sung on the Pont Neuf. In his preface, moreover, the author avows that he had never learned any thing of value from the Greek ;—one of the few assertions in which all will readily believe him. This treatise, entitled *Conjectures Académiques ou Diss. sur l'Iliade*, by Hedelin, the Abbé d'Aubignac, a man in other respects neither contemptible nor wanting in sense, which had been long withheld, either out of friendship for him or for the ancients, was at length published after the author's death. The frequent perusal of this publication made me sick of my own opinions, into some resemblance of which his thoughtless temerity and his ignorance of antiquity had carried him, and I seriously began to collect arguments in support of the common doctrines, inconsistent as they are ; for I perceived that Hedelin had not been well answered by Boileau, Dacier and others. Thus laboring in various ways to meet the historical difficulties of the subject, harassed by them again, and again compelled to yield, I am conscious that I have indulged neither vanity nor a passion for novel opinions, and that I have used every exertion to avoid the snares of error. To this fact many of my friends can bear witness, whom of late years I have called to share in my labors, inviting them to search for the truth, and to collect with care every thing which they could find in the poems themselves in opposition to my views. And now, I do not urge these points with the wish of bringing over to my opinions any one who is not convinced of their truth ; but that, if I have erred or have wrested the truth in any respect, the error may be detected and exposed.*

The opinion of Wolf is, that these poems existed at first in separate portions, most of them the productions of Homer himself, and that they were collected and arranged, so as to form the epics which we now have, in a later age, by the Pisistratidae, or under their patronage ; that these works were not at once brought to their present state of perfection, but were emended from time to time by the labors of succeeding critics, until the age of the Alexandrian school. These views coincide very nearly with those of Heyne ; the only difference being, that Wolf admits Homer to a large share of the honors which he has received for centuries, while Heyne, if he allows his existence, considers him as one of a number of bards, who sung in common the praises of the heroes of the Trojan war.

* Prolegomena, p. 113.

It has been made a question, to which of these German critics belongs the credit of the new doctrine respecting the Homeric poems. Wolf published his edition of Homer in 1785, while Heyne was preparing his, and thus secured the reputation of being the founder of the new school. Heyne, however, in a memoir read before the royal society of Goëtingen, claimed the merit of having always entertained the same opinion; a remark which was understood by Wolf, who had been his pupil and heard his lectures upon Homer, to convey an insinuation in regard to his originality, which he repelled with much severity, asserting moreover, that there was a material difference in their views. Hence arose a jealousy between these eminent scholars and critics, which more than once betrays itself in the *Excursus* of Heyne. The difference in their views, however, so far as we can discern, is unimportant. But a marked difference in their intellectual traits of character is apparent in their writings. The one was cautious, the other bold and fearless; and we apprehend the truth of the matter to be, that what Heyne first suggested, Wolf affirmed. By the boldness of his criticism, the pupil bore away the palm, which his accomplished instructor had long held within his grasp. It is highly probable too, that Heyne was confirmed in the opinions which he had long entertained, but which he had not ventured to publish, by the decision of Wolf, supported as it was by the most profound erudition, and therefore expressed himself in his later writings with more clearness than he had done in his earlier ones.

The genuineness of one or both of these poems, notwithstanding the objections of Heyne and Wolf, has been maintained with much ability and learning; among others, by Hug, a German critic, by the Baron Sainte Croix of France, and by Richard Payne Knight and Granville Penn of England. Penn defends the perfect unity of the *Iliad* as fully and with as much spirit, as Aristotle could have done. This point is conceded by Knight, whose *Prolegomena* is, in our estimation, one of the best monuments of English learning. The hypothesis of Wolf and Heyne has been the prevailing belief in Germany; but has found few friends in England, Holland, France or Italy. Villoison, whose edition of the *Iliad*, founded on a new recension of manuscripts, with a more copious collection of *scholia* than any that preceded it, did more than any thing else to prepare the way for the new doctrines, could never,

says his biographer, speak of this perversion, as he regarded it, of his labors, without indignation. He was so afflicted with the idea, that he had unwittingly furnished the materials on which Wolf had constructed his system, and the weapons with which he defended it, as almost to repent that he had published his work. More than once, he was tempted to combat this literary impiety, but was restrained by the fear of adding to its importance, and of giving it currency by his efforts to destroy it. He therefore deemed it best to leave to past and future ages the care of the glory of Homer.* †

In respect to the question of the genuineness of these poems, the first inquiry which presents itself is, What is the testimony of history on this subject? And we have proof at the outset, of the utter uncertainty which rests upon the whole historical question. When did Homer live? Herodotus, as we shall soon see, fixes his era at about 900 B. C. The author of the life of Homer, falsely ascribed to Herodotus, supposes that he lived in the year 1102 B. C. R. P. Knight is inclined to carry back his age to 1200, ‡ and Heyne prefers 907 B. C.§ We are inclined to adopt the opinion of Heyne on this point, as it corresponds more nearly than any other with what we can learn of the condition of Ionia, the home of the bard, and with the explicit testimony of Herodotus. The argument, however, does not rest on the settlement

* Schœll, *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque*, Tom. 1.

† What we have stated above are not the only conjectures, which the ingenuity of critics has formed respecting the Homeric poems. A dissertation from no less a personage than Joshua Barnes is said to exist in one of the public libraries in England, the object of which is to prove that the *Iliad* was composed by Solomon during his apostacy. An Irish antiquary undertakes to maintain, that the Homeric, as well as all the earliest poems of the Greeks, were of Celtic origin, and were translated into Greek by Tarpander or some of his contemporaries, in the seventh century before Christ. (*Collectanea Hibernica*, as referred to by Knight, in his *Proleg.*) Some of the ancients pretended, that Homer stole his poems from an Egyptian temple; a hypothesis not very different from that of Bryant, the visionary author of the *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, who argues from the *truth and minuteness* of the descriptions of Ithaca, that Homer was an Egyptian who settled there: though these descriptions are thought by others so entirely at variance with the true geography of the island, that the locality must have been as truly a fiction of the fancy, as the Lilliputian isles of Gulliver. See Knight's *Proleg.* § 49.

‡ *Proleg.* § 62.

§ Exc. 3. ad Lib. 24, where the question is discussed.

of this point. It is convenient to have some date in view, to which we may refer.

The earliest mention of Homer is made by Pindar, who alludes to the praises of Ulysses and Ajax, as celebrated by the poet, thus recognising the existence of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Pindar was born in 522 B. C. Herodotus, who recited his history at the Olympic games in 445 B. C., uses this language in his second book; 'Hesiod and Homer lived four hundred years and no more before me. They formed the Grecian theogony, gave the gods their names,' &c. He also quotes passages from both poems,* and what is worthy of notice, refers to what were called the Cyprian verses, and argues that these were not a production of Homer, from the difference between them and the well known poems of the ancient bard. Thucydides, also, a contemporary of Herodotus, often refers to Homer and his poems.

There is no question, then, that these poems existed as early as 500 B. C. For this fact, we have the testimony of contemporary writers. This, however, is more than four hundred years later than the age in which, on the most favorable view, the poet is supposed to have lived. What notices can we collect of their history before this period?

First, then, in regard to Greece Proper; for as Homer was an Ionian, his poems must have been introduced into Greece at a later period. Have we any accounts of their being thus introduced? Heraclides of Pontus, a contemporary of Plato and Aristotle, states in general terms, as quoted by Heyne, that Lycurgus, who lived a century after the poet, first brought the poems of Homer into the Peloponnesus, having received them from the descendants of a certain Creophylus. No one knows who Creophylus and his family were; but they may have been, and probably were, a family of rhapsodists or bards, who had retained the poems of Homer, and were in the habit of reciting them. Heraclides lived about the year 330 B. C. Plutarch, who died A. D. 140, informs us, that Lycurgus, who first met with the poems of Homer in Crete, wrote out and collected them in order to carry them to Greece. Ælian, a contemporary of Plutarch, in his *Variae Historiae*, states that Lycurgus brought *all* his poems into Greece.† It will be noticed that Heraclides, the most ancient authority, expresses himself

* Herod. 2. 116.

† Ælian, V.H. 13, 14.

in general terms, while Plutarch and Ælian, nearly five hundred years afterwards, are very positive and particular in their statements. We cannot, however, for other reasons, place dependence on these testimonies. We shall soon see how much credit is due to the story of Lycurgus writing out a copy of the Homeric poems, and it is unfortunate for this story, that no copy of the poems existed in Greece in the age of Pisistratus. The probability is, that Lycurgus introduced some, perhaps a large portion of the Homeric poetry into Greece, by means of rhapsodists ;—more we cannot assert.

We are now obliged to pass over the three hundred years after Lycurgus. That long interval is a blank in the history of these poems. There is good evidence, that at the end of this period, that is to say, about 550 B. C., when Pisistratus had the ascendancy in Athens, they were collected by him, aided perhaps by his son Hipparchus, or under his authority. Plato informs us, that Hipparchus brought them to Athens and ordained, that at the great festival of Attica, the Panathenaea, the different cantos should be sung or recited in succession, as was the custom one hundred years later, in his own time. The law, it may be here remarked, which required the rhapsodists to recite these poems in a certain order, is ascribed by some to Solon, who flourished fifty years before Pisistratus, in consequence of which the merit of collecting them has been assigned to him. This is not material. We may conclude without much danger of mistake, that these poems were introduced into Greece in their present form in the age of the Pisistratidae, when, under their patronage, literature and the arts received a great impulse.

Such are the notices which we find respecting the history of these poems in Western Greece, or Greece Proper. The amount of the whole is, that the knowledge of them was brought thither a century after the age of the poet ; but that they were not collected into the form which they afterwards preserved, until more than three hundred years after they were composed. Let us now direct our inquiries to the Grecian colonies of Asia Minor. Here we might reasonably expect proofs of their existence at a much earlier period.

Herodotus, himself an Ionian, is silent respecting their history. He frequently alludes to them or quotes from them, but without an intimation of the existence of any suspicion of their genuineness. He was highly inquisitive, and as

these poems were the pride of his countrymen, we may suppose that he was well acquainted with all that was known of their history. His total silence on this point, especially when we consider that he generally relates the traditions of every kind that fell within his notice, even those of the priests of Memphis, is a strong and in our view an incontrovertible argument, that they must have existed in Ionia in their present form, substantially at least, long before his time. His researches into the history of Asia extend to a period two hundred years before his day, and yet he meets with no tradition of any collection of these poems, like that we read of in the history of Western Greece ;—nothing, in short, which excites a suspicion that they were not the genuine productions of the ancient bard. Still, there is a wide chasm of more than two hundred years, which history does not reach. There is no proof that these poems had not existed, from the supposed era of the poet, as they were in the age of Herodotus and long before his time, but we have no direct evidence on this point.* It will be observed, then, that the state of the question, at present, is this. We have good evidence, that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* existed in their present form in Western Greece, four hundred years after the age of their reputed author ; and that in Ionia, at the same time, they not only so existed, but no report of their ever having existed in a different form had been noticed in the minute researches of Herodotus. In further pursuing our inquiries, our reasoning must be derived from internal evidence, that is, from the poems themselves, and from the nature of the case, aided by such conjectures, as we can form from the circumstances of the period when Homer is said to have lived.

From the circumstance, that public provision was made for the recitation of these poems at the public festival of the inhabitants of Attica, and from the well established fact, that they were collected with much care and labor under the direction of the Pisistratidae, we conclude that they before ex-

* We find a circumstance stated in the following passage, which is strikingly in accordance with this reasoning. Marseilles was founded by Ionian exiles, in 539 B. C. ‘*Inter exemplaria antiqua in bibliotheca Alexandrina asservata percelebre fuit Massiliense illud, quod reges Alexandrini ex ea civitate coemerant, vel conscribendum curaverant ex antiquiore quodam, quod conditores, exsultantes ex Ionia, secum asportasse credibile est.* Knight’s *Proleg.* § 33.

isted in distinct portions. We do not refer to the present division into twenty-four books. This division is generally ascribed to the Grammarians of Alexandria, and seems to have been regulated on no other principle, than that the cantos should be as nearly equal in length as possible, and should correspond with the letters of the alphabet. It often interrupts the narrative, and has doubtless been the cause of many interpolations. But a careful reader of the Iliad can discern without difficulty, that it may be divided into different parts, corresponding with the different stages in the progress of the action; and that these parts may constitute separate poems, for the purposes of recitation, and possess an interest of their own, apart from the general interest of the whole. This, however, is not a peculiarity of the Homeric poems. Such a division of these poems would differ essentially from that with which we are familiar; but we find, in the allusions made by ancient writers, grounds for the conjecture, that such a division might actually have existed before the time of Pisistratus. Ælian,* a rather late authority to be sure, has a leading passage on this point, in which he specifies the different portions as they were sung, and gives us the titles which they bore. For example, one portion was called Ἡ ἐπὶ ταῖς ναυσὶ μάχη, the battle at the ships; another Δολονία, the affair of Dolon; a third, Ἑκτορος καὶ Ἀνδρομάχης ὀμιλία, the interview of Hector and Andromache; and so of other portions. A similar division was made of the Odyssey. Heyne has collected different parts of the Iliad, thus referred to by ancient writers, which embrace nearly the whole poem. These distinct portions were called rhapsodies, from the circumstance that they were recited by bards who were called rhapsodists, a name derived from two Greek words, *ῥάπτειν ὡδ' ἦν*, which signify, to sew together a song. But is there evidence, that these poems were thus recited by the rhapsodists?

It is perfectly well understood, that in the heroic age and the ages immediately following, poems were not composed to be read, but to be recited at feasts and public assemblies. We find frequent allusions to such a custom in Homer; and it moreover accords with what we know of nations in a certain stage of their progress to refinement. They have their bards, their minstrels, their scalds. The poems of Homer were doubtless

recited as other poems were. But we have express testimony on this subject. Ancient writers speak of the Homeridae, rhapsodists so named, at first, from their recitation of the Homeric poems. The most interesting authority on this point is found in an ode of Pindar,* in which he alludes to the Homeridae as *αοιδὸὶ ἑσπέρῳ*, singers of songs *sewn* together, or, as Heyne interprets the expression, composed according to the laws of metre. The scholiast on this passage uses the following language. ‘They anciently called those Homeridae, who were of the family of Homer, and who sang in succession his poems; afterwards the rhapsodists, who did not trace their origin to him, sang his poetry.’ The law before referred to, enacted by Solon, or one of the Pisistratidae, establishes the same conclusion.

The data, therefore, on which we found the conclusion that the poems of Homer, in the ages immediately subsequent to that in which he lived, were sung or recited in separate rhapsodies, are the following. It is the testimony of all antiquity, that before writing came into general use, there prevailed a custom of reciting poems in public assemblies and on festive occasions. Ancient authors assert, that the poems of Homer were thus recited. They also refer distinctly to different portions of these poems, as having been recited separately by the rhapsodists; and we can see that such portions may be recited as distinct poems, and may excite a powerful interest. A law, regulating these recitations, was moreover enacted in Athens, at a very early period, so that a particular order was observed in the succession of the rhapsodists. We have, also, an account of the first collection of what had thus become separate rhapsodies, into a single poem.

We now come to another and more difficult inquiry. Did not these poems always exist in the form of separate rhapsodies, until they were collected by the Pisistratidae?

It should be borne in mind, that the fact of their being recited in separate portions, is no proof that they existed so originally. On the supposition, that two poems of such length and of such a nature were composed by the individual whose name they bear, the rhapsodists would, for their own convenience, have been likely to divide them, if it were practicable, just as we find that they were divided; in a foreign land, these rhapsodies would obviously be likely before many years to become

* Nem. 2, 1.

permanently separate, unless measures were adopted to preserve them in their natural union; and we cannot perceive any proof, that the labors of Pisistratus and his son amounted to more than this. The testimony of Plato, the earliest authority, has been already adduced, and his language does not touch this point. Cicero thus alludes to this, as the work of Pisistratus; ‘qui (Pisistratus) primus Homeri libros, confusos antea, sic disposuisse dicitur, ut nunc habemus.’* With due deference to great names, we must maintain, that a fair interpretation of his words necessarily implies nothing more than that these poems, being recited in different portions and by different persons in Greece, had become *confused* or deranged, and that Pisistratus first restored them to their proper form. But if Pisistratus rendered this great service to the cause of letters, of first collecting the scattered relics of a former age, why is not the honor of it ascribed to him by the earliest writers? It would seem that so remarkable a fact in the history of literature, a public transaction too, could not have been lost before the lapse of a single age, or have escaped the scrutinizing eye of Herodotus; yet, as the case is well stated by Knight,† neither Herodotus nor Thucydides, nor Plato, nor Aristotle, who have handed down so much respecting Homer, and Pisistratus and his sons, seems to have had the slightest knowledge of this fact. Aristotle commends Homer, in exalted terms, for the beautiful arrangement and skilful structure of his poems, without suspecting that those praises belonged of right to Pisistratus, the real author of all this order, and not to the poet himself. Furthermore, it is difficult to perceive why, in the general search for the most ancient and the rarest copies of the Greek writers throughout the world, which was made by the Ptolemies, when they were collecting the celebrated Alexandrian library at an expense that a royal treasury alone could bear, and which brought to light so many editions of the Homeric poems, the Massilian, the Chian, Sinopic, Cretan and Argive ones, the αἱ κατὰ πόλεις and the αἱ κατ’ ἀνδρα.—they should not have first secured this *princeps editio* of the Pisistratidae. And yet we find no mention of an Athenian copy, a circumstance which throws strong suspicion over the whole story.‡ We say

* De Orat. 3. 34.

† Proleg. § 4.

‡ Galen, in his Commentaries on Hippocrates, among other curious statements, showing the great efforts made by one of the Ptolemies

nothing here of the improbabilities implied in the supposition, that two poems, which have commanded the admiration of succeeding ages, were constructed from the separate recitations of itinerant rhapsodists; as this will be more fully considered in another place.

We therefore see nothing in the story respecting Pisistratus, that invalidates in the least the genuineness of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; and we think we are safe in affirming, that there is nothing in the poems themselves, which would have led to a suspicion of their just claims to the character of genuine epics of the bardic age of the Greeks. They contain, it is true, no distinct notices of their reputed author, nor of his age. And yet the metre, the forms of the language and the manners of the poems, are all characteristic of the Homeric age, and peculiar to it. They have never been counterfeited. It is argued, however, that the art of writing was not known, or at least not in general use, in the age usually assigned to Homer. It is difficult, then, say those who impugn their genuineness, to imagine how a poet, without the art of writing to assist his memory, should have conceived the design of these two great poems, or if he had conceived, should have been able to execute it; and as poetry, at that period, was designed for recitation, how he should have thought of composing works of such length, that they could not be recited at one time. Such a recitation must have occupied many days. And then, again, it is thought to present a serious difficulty to suppose, that people assembled to hear, for several days in succession, without weariness on their part and exhaustion on that of the bard, the recitation of the fifteen thousand verses of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*: so that the poet who should, under the circumstances of that age, compose poems of such length, to use the humorous comparison of Wolf, would be very like a man, who, in the first rude attempts in navigation, should have

to procure books for their library, has the following, to which we would call the attention of the reader. 'What he did to the Athenians was no small evidence of his diligence in obtaining ancient works. He took copies of Sophocles, Euripides and Æschylus, merely to copy and then return them without injury, on a pledge of *fifteen talents* of silver. Having procured splendid copies, on the most beautiful paper, he retained those which he received from the Athenians, and sent them the copies he had made, urging them to accept the new copies and keep the fifteen talents.'

built a huge vessel in the interior with the necessary machines and rollers for moving it, but without a sea on which to test the success of his skill.

As respects the last part of the objection, it is a sufficient reply, that there were festivals which lasted several days, and such poems were well suited to such occasions. Herodotus read his history at the Olympic festival. A public provision, as we have seen, was made by Pisistratus or his son, for the recitation of the Homeric poems in succession, at the Panathenaeon festival; and there is reason to conjecture that the Tetralogies, or sets of plays, which were prepared for the great festivals of later times, afford a specimen of these entertainments. But was not the art of writing known in the Homeric age? Josephus asserts, that Homer did not commit his poems to writing; but his authority was regarded as of too recent date to merit much attention, until the question was discussed by Wood. We will state briefly the argument upon it.

The introduction of letters into Greece is uniformly ascribed by ancient writers, from Herodotus down, to Cadmus, the Phœnician, who is said to have arrived in Greece about 1550 B. C. Supposing this account to be correct, it is argued, that in the barbarous state of society at that time, it would have required ages for this alphabet to come into general use. But would it not have become generally known in five or six hundred years? Had this been the case, the public laws would have been written. Yet Zaleucus, who lived as late as 660 B. C., passed among the ancients for the first who committed laws to writing. Seventy years after, Solon inscribed his laws on wood. This material indicates the earliest stages of the art, and yet more the style of the writing, which was that called *βουστροφηδον*, which literally means turning in the manner of oxen, that is, from the right to the left, and then from the left to the right, as land is furrowed with a plough. The Greek alphabet, moreover, was not completed until the sixth or the fifth century before our era, and was not used to record public acts at Athens, until after the Peloponnesian war in the Archonship of Euclid, 403 B. C.; and how is it possible, it is asked, that the art of writing should have been in use in the age of Homer?

In reply to these statements, it may be said, that granting them to be true in relation to Greece Proper, they prove nothing in regard to the Grecian colonies of Asia Minor. These colonies

enjoyed a flourishing commerce ; much attention was given in them to the arts of life, and much progress must have been made in refinement, centuries before the age of Solon. Besides, if Syria were the home of letters, commerce might have introduced them at a very early period into Asia Minor ; and, what is of some importance, we have direct accounts that the Ionians, and after them the Samians, adopted the alphabet of twenty-four letters, before the Greeks of the mother country.

There is one passage in the *Iliad*, in which it is thought by some, that allusion is made to alphabetical writing.* Admitting the correctness of the interpretation which favors this opinion, we cannot infer much from this single passage, as the substance here mentioned, on which the writing was executed, is wood. Were the twenty or thirty thousand verses of these poems written on tablets of wood ? This leads us to the inquiry whether materials were then known, which would answer the common purposes of writing.

The materials used for writing in the earliest ages, were stone, wood, metals, waxen tablets, the bark and leaves of trees, skins and linen. Parchment was not known before the time of Eumenes, king of Pergamus, a little earlier than 200 B. C. Herodotus informs us, that papyrus was used in his time for the purposes of writing, nor does he speak of the use of it as recent. We cannot, however, trace it higher than the sixth century before Christ ; and even this view of the matter is somewhat doubtful, for Varro, as appears from Pliny, was of opinion that it was not in common use until after Alexandria was built, (330 B. C.,) and Pliny adopts the same opinion.† According to Herodotus, the skins of animals, prepared in a particular way, were employed for the purpose in Ionia. There is no direct evidence that they were not used in the age of Homer, and if so, they are the only material on which his poems could have been written. A treaty concluded between the Gabii and Tarquinius Superbus, written on a wooden buckler covered with an ox-hide, was in preservation at Rome, when Dionysius Halicarnassus wrote his *Roman Antiquities* ; but for three centuries after the poet, there is no

* Il. 6. 168. The story of Bellerophon. One other is also referred to by those, who maintain the affirmative of the question. Il. 7. 175. It seems to us to have no weight.

† Wolf's *Proleg.* p. 59. & note 22. Pliny's *Nat. Hist.* 13. 11.

trace of any specimen of writing whatever. It is scarcely credible, it is said, that these poems, bearing a date, too, three hundred years before other monuments of writing, which in themselves have the appearance almost of a first attempt, should stand in the midst of this desert of all written works, as specimens of the art in its full perfection,

All this, it may be replied, as before, is true in its application to Western Greece. Though there is no direct evidence of the existence of the art of writing in the colonies of Asia Minor, still there is none to the contrary, and for aught that appears, though the probability is perhaps against the supposition, Homer may have enjoyed the benefit of this art. When we reflect, however, on the manners of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, there are strong reasons for believing, that writing was not in common use. They are conclusive against its use at the time when the scene of the poems is laid. Treaties are made, messages sent, and orders given, without the aid of writing. A letter or two, says Rousseau, would have blown up the whole plot of the *Odyssey*; and to suppose that the use of writing was then known, would make the poem a tissue of absurdities. Poems, moreover, were composed not to be read but to be heard. Had the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* been committed to writing, it would not have been done for an age in which there were no readers; and what probability is there, that the author would have subjected himself to the thankless labor of copying his works for future ages, especially when the means of doing it were so imperfect? We find Herodotus, four hundred years later, reciting his history to the Greeks assembled at the Olympic games. The disciples of the philosophers, in the most refined periods of Greece, received their instructions from the lips of their masters. Socrates left no writings. This authorizes the presumption, that at so early a period as the one in question, the art of writing must have been unknown.

There is another consideration, which is, in our view, not without importance. The poets of the Homeric age were called *αῳδοί*, singers, and poetry was called *αῳδή*, song, a circumstance which justifies the conclusion that poetry was originally sung or chanted. Whenever the art of writing became so common, that the productions of mind could be recorded, we might expect a class of works to appear, which from their nature cannot be chanted. Now we have evidence that the

art of writing was diffused to a considerable extent in Ionia and Greece, not long before the time of Herodotus. Precisely at that period, the first works in prose made their appearance; we refer to those of Pherecydes of Scyros, and Cadmus the Milesian, who lived in the sixth century before our era. We are inclined, therefore, to the belief, that before this period literary productions were not committed to writing. The history of Arabian literature confirms this view of the connexion between a general diffusion of the art of writing and the origin of prose compositions. There are no prose writings of the Arabs prior to the Koran. This, says Sir W. Jones, is to be ascribed to their want of skill in writing, to their predilection for poetical measure, and to the facility with which verses are committed to memory. Writing, he adds, was so little practised among them, that the old poems, which are now accessible to us, may almost be considered as originally unwritten.*

This inquiry has formed an important part of the discussion respecting the genuineness of the Homeric poems, because it has been thought inconceivable, that they could have been either composed or preserved without the aid of writing. We are not sure, that this point is of so much importance. Let it be allowed that the art of writing was unknown to Homer;—is this fact decisive?

There is a difficulty in reasoning upon this point, because, under existing circumstances, we can form but a very imperfect judgment of the power of memory, in supplying the want of written language. We must forget the present, and go back in fancy to the past, when men had nothing but their memories to depend upon, for the preservation of their literature; and there are striking instances in proof of the surprising perfection which the memory, under such circumstances, will attain.

There is a fact reported by one who had travelled among the Hebrides and the Highlands of Scotland, which is in itself so curious, and has so important a bearing on the point under consideration, that we will introduce it to the notice of our readers. ‘In a tour through Scotland,’ says this writer, ‘I visited the Hebrides and met with many old men, who neither spoke a word of English nor could read a word in any language. These men repeated many of the poems

* *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. 2, 14.

ascribed to Ossian and other ancient bards. One of these poems I wrote with such orthography and characters, as I thought might answer to the sounds which were uttered by the old man. I afterwards read it slowly to a sensible old woman, who understood it and the English well enough to give me a translation. It was as regular a poem as any I have seen translated, possessing also much genius; but she often lamented the poverty of the English language, which, she said, was incapable of expressing the sublimity of many of the passages. I saw and heard more unpublished poems of this kind, than have been printed by Macpherson and Clarke (the translators of the Caledonian Bards,) and have heard also some of the poems which those gentlemen have translated. Though I wrote tolerably fast, I learned by some of my acquaintance, that the venerable old man could repeat such a variety, as to keep me writing half a year.*

We will adduce another fact, which proves, that poems of even greater extent than those ascribed to Homer, may be preserved in the memories of a people, less civilized than were his countrymen. The Calmucs have their Homer, who flourished in the last century, and whose works much exceed those of the ancient bard in length, but have never been committed to writing. This poet is said to have sung three hundred and sixty cantos. These cantos are of about the same length as those of the Iliad, and although it is not easy to find one of their rhapsodists who can repeat more than twenty of them, yet a Calmuc, who can do this, has at command a poem nearly as long as the Iliad or the Odyssey.

The Eddas and Sagas of the ancient Scandinavians, the former containing their mythology and the latter their traditional history, existed centuries before they were reduced to writing. Dr. Henderson has, within a few years, observed, that relics of the custom of recitation which anciently prevailed, are yet found among the present inhabitants of Iceland. 'A winter evening,' he remarks, 'in an Icelandic family presents a scene in the highest degree interesting and pleasing. Between three and four o'clock, the lamp is hung up in the principal apartment, and all the members of the family take their station with their work in their hands. The work is no sooner begun, than one of the family, selected on purpose, ad-

* Amer. Phil. Trans. vol. 3, Art. Cadmus. Note A., 279.

vances to a seat near the lamp, and commences the evening lecture, which generally consists of some old Saga or such other histories, as are to be obtained on the island. In some houses the Sagas are *repeated* by such as have got them by heart; and instances are not uncommon of itinerating historians, who gain a livelihood during the winter, by staying at different farms until they have exhausted their stock of literary knowledge. This custom,' he adds, 'appears to have existed among the Scandinavians from time immemorial. The person chosen as reciter was called Thulr, and was always celebrated for his knowledge of past events, and the dignity and pathos with which he related them. It is to him, and the seat or pulpit on which he was elevated, that Odin alludes in the following part of the Hâvamâl, or the "sublime:" (a portion of the Sagas.)

'T is time to recite
From the seat of eloquence,
Close by the fountain of Urd :*
I sat and was silent,
I saw and reflected,
I listened to that which was told.†

It appears that the memory was not unfrequently exercised in a remarkable manner in Greece, even in the period of her highest cultivation. Xenophon represents a person as saying that his father compelled him to learn all the poems of Homer, and that he was able to repeat the whole Iliad and Odyssey.‡

The preceding facts and statements make it evident, as we conceive, how these poems might be preserved in the memories of men. Similar achievements have been effected by people less refined and less highly gifted than were those

* By the 'fountain of Urd,' the poet here means the source of wisdom, and intimates, that as he had long sat and listened to the tales of other years, he was now qualified for the chair himself.

† Journal of a Residence in Iceland, p. 154.

‡ The whole history of the North, says Botin, as quoted by Constant, was preserved in poetry without being written. There are yet in Finland peasants, whose memory equals that of the Greek rhapsodists. These peasants generally compose verses, and some recite very long poems, which they preserve in their memory as they correct them, without writing them. Constant, de la Religion, Tome 3, 444. Paris. 1827.

of Greece or Ionia. But we must bear in mind, that these efforts of memory were not casual; they were strictly professional; and as the rhapsodists must have kept the memory in continual exercise, we can hardly imagine the degree of perfection to which they may have thus attained. Many instances are on record of individuals, who have exhibited surprising facility in acquiring and tenacity in retaining language. And, under the constant cultivation of the period to which we refer, the memory may, in ordinary cases, have attained a degree of perfection, which now occurs only in rare and wonderful instances.

The inquiry still remains, how could the poet have conceived and executed the design of such extensive works, without the aid of writing? In answer to this inquiry it may be said, that if there were a succession of poets, who composed and recited poems of greater or less extent without such aid, and of this there can be no doubt, there is no more difficulty in conceiving that one may surpass the rest in genius and achievement, than that any individual in other respects may go far beyond his contemporaries. We, who possess every facility for recording our thoughts as they arise, can form no idea of the power which a mind, compelled to depend on its own resources, may acquire of treasuring up within itself its conceptions and thoughts for future use. Modern times have exhibited a most interesting and imposing picture of the great epic poet of our own language, enshrouded in perpetual darkness, and yet conceiving and executing the magnificent design of one of the noblest efforts of genius; dictating a poem of greater length than the *Iliad*, full of vast reach of thought, of surpassing sublimity, of matchless inspiration. This achievement of Milton is hardly less surprising for his time, than that which we ascribe to the father of the epic poem, for the age in which he lived.

Having shewn conclusively, as we think, that, even in the most unfavorable aspect of the question, these poems might have been originally conceived and executed by the individual whose name they bear, we are prepared to meet the inquiry directly, and state our reasons for believing, at least, that each of them was originally the conception of a single mind;—and that they have come down to us, in all important respects, as they proceeded from the lips of their author or authors. It will be perceived, that we leave the question whether they both

proceeded from the same mind, open for separate discussion. Some of the ancients entertained doubts respecting the authorship of the *Odyssey*, but none of them went so far as to suppose that it was a production of many minds. The two questions are wholly distinct.

We have already remarked, that there is nothing in the poems themselves, which would have led to a serious doubt that they were genuine epics. We cannot otherwise account for the general belief respecting the character of these poems, which has prevailed from the earliest period until within fifty years. If they were a mere collection of rhapsodies of different poets or a single one, how could this have escaped the notice of Herodotus, Thucydides, and more than all, of Aristotle and Longinus, professed and acute critics? We are aware that it has been often replied to this, that the ancients knew nothing of the principles of historical criticism; that they were imposed upon by the most idle tales; and that, as Greeks, they were proud of their national poetry. But this reply is not sufficient. They might have been deceived in regard to their true authorship; they might have ascribed to the same author what belonged to two; but are we to believe, that it was reserved for amateurs of these last days to detect changes in this early minstrelsy, which had fallen unheeded on the ears of those who gloried in it as their native song? Nay, the prince of ancient critics extolled the unity of the *Iliad* as the chief merit of the poem; and some of his followers even denied, that a single verse could be removed without impairing the structure of the poem. Three things were said to be equally impracticable; to take from Jove his thunderbolt, his club from Hercules, and a verse from Homer. This was extravagant indeed, but it shows how far they were from suspecting those defects in unity, which modern critics have thought so glaring. We cannot, however, conceive how any one can read the *Iliad* without being struck with its unity. In the midst of the surprising variety of incident which constitutes the action of the poem, and which tends of course to distract the attention, the fortunes of the principal hero and his injured honor, which Jupiter himself has undertaken to maintain, are never forgotten; and this, in fact, is the principal source of that interest which this wonderful poem uniformly excites. We should by no means defend the unbroken unity of the *Iliad* as warmly as the older critics; yet we believe that modern criticism has gone

as far towards the opposite extreme, when it refers us to many things which offend against perfect unity ; when it imagines that it can discriminate the different parts which have been combined into this whole, and professes to point out the seams and even the stitches of this wondrous patchwork of primæval minstrelsy. We may estimate the degree of confidence to be reposed in the results of this hypercriticism, when we see that, which one regards as a weakness in the structure of the poem, regarded by another as essential to its compactness ; and we cannot better illustrate the uncertainty attending the decisions of criticism where a favorite theory is in question, than by comparing the views of two eminent critics on the same passages.

The description of the shield of Achilles, in the eighteenth book, was condemned by ancient critics as an interpolation. Heyne investigates its credit with great learning, and rejects it without hesitation, as having no connexion with the action of the poem, but rather interrupting the progress of the story, and as implying a degree of advancement in the arts beyond that of the poet's age. But whoever will read Knight's comments* on the criticism of the German scholar will, we think, find the argument against the passage very sensibly impaired in weight. Eustathius, as quoted by Heyne, relates an old story, that the rhapsody which constitutes the tenth book of the Iliad, the subject of which is the nocturnal expedition of Ulysses and Diomedes into the Trojan camp, or, as it is sometimes entitled, the affair of Dolon, was composed separately by Homer and inserted by Pisistratus in the Iliad. Heyne adds other considerations, tending to invalidate the genuineness of this book ; as, for example, that it bears marks of labored adaptation to the preceding part of the narrative, and that its action is attended with no result, and is of course of no importance in the conduct of the poem. On this criticism, Knight has the following remarks.

‘ Neque exquisitiore aliquo ingenii acumine, sed communi hominis cujusvis sensu in re critica ūti (me fateor) ; at quoad communi hoc sensu judicare liceat, venia viri doctissimi dixerim, nulla pars neque Iliadis, neque alius cujuscunque poematis, magis e præcedentibus et ante narratis pendet, quam rhapsodia illa decima. Animorum affectus, locorum situs, castrorum custodiæ, ducum orationes, omnium denique rerum gestarum in

* Proleg. §. 11.

utroque exercitu nexus et consilia, non nisi ex ante actis intelligi possunt; neque poeta, si ejusmodi carmen singulare apud homines simplices et agrestes, quales erant omnes propemodum illius aevi, cecinisset, ad vigesimum versum audientium coronam tenuisset.*

Our readers perhaps will be disposed to believe, that little reliance can be placed on any conclusions to which we may arrive on a subject, to which no general principles seem to be applicable. A solution of the difficulty, we apprehend, is found in the influence of a favorite theory on the mind, which has already been alluded to, and in the want of clear, well defined views of what is implied in epic unity. The *Épopée* does not require the unity of the drama. It cannot be confined by the strict laws of a perfect unity. Least of all, could the epic of the Homeric age be thus shackled. As we have seen, this was designed for recitation;—a recitation not continuous, but interrupted by intervals. An unbroken unity would not have answered the purposes of the poet. The defects in respect to unity, then, which are diligently sought out and placed before us in imposing array, are in favor of the claims of Homer. They are brought forward as proof, that this poem is not what it claims to be, an original conception of one mind. We say in reply, that such defects might be expected in a work composed without model and without rules, and under circumstances peculiarly unfavorable;—nay more, they are precisely such as ought to have existed in the circumstances of the case; they were required by the nature of the poem. A perfect unity would, in our apprehension, rather indicate the critical labor of a later hand.

As this is an important point in the discussion, we will illustrate it by quoting some ingenious remarks of Mr. Coleridge on the true idea of the *Iliad*, as an epic poem. They occur in connexion with an inquiry as to the real subject of the poem. We are pleased with them in general, although we should go farther in our views of the unity of the poem, than he seems inclined to do.

‘It may indeed be well doubted, whether the presumption of a necessity for a pre-arranged plan, exactly commensurate with the extent of the poem, is not founded on a misconception of the history and character of early heroic poetry. Such a presumption seems in fact deduced from an analogy with the artificial con-

* Proleg. §. 27.

texture of the drama in its finished state ; although even in that case the difference between the Persians of *Æschylus* and the first *Œdipus* of *Sophocles* is as great, as between the *Iliad* and the *Jerusalem Delivered*. In the first essays of national poetry, impassioned and varied narration is the paramount requisite ; there must be passion to excite sympathy, variety to prevent disgust, and narration or a story to sustain the attention ; but the intricacy, the dove-tailing, the counterpoint of the drama and of modern epics would be useless, because never presented, except in fragments, to the mind of the audience. A certain consistency of character is necessary to create a complete conception of it, and of story, to induce a sense of probability : but perhaps to seek for more than this would be to forget the constitution of society, and the peculiar spirit of heroic poetry in the infancy of a nation. It may seem, therefore, that the resentment of *Achilles* and his return to the war, are more properly the connecting link or running thread, than the specific subject of the *Iliad*,—the centre round which the orb of the song moves, but not the circumference which bounds it,—the point of departure and the object of frequent retrospect ; but that one half the Poem would have been as noble and consistent in itself, if *Achilles* had never left *Phthia*, or never quarrelled with *Agamemnon*. The single combats of *Menelaus* and *Paris*, of *Hector* and *Ajax* ; the *Ἀγιορείαι*, or days of *Diomed*, of *Agamemnon*, of *Ulysses*, of *Idomeneus*, of *Menelaus*, the funeral games of *Patroclus*, and the restitution and burial of the body of *Hector*, are all of them splendid minstrelsies, generally complete in themselves, yet having an obvious connexion as still telling the same great tale of *Troy*. If the divine genius, which ended these immortal rhapsodies with the lamentation of women over the lifeless body of *Hector*, had gone on and told the fall of *Achilles* himself, the mortal conflict round his body, the capture and the flames of *Ilion*, the blood of *Priam* and the shrieks of *Cassandra*,—still those added rhapsodies would have been an *Iliad* ; and still, in a vague way, they might be said to have had the same general theme in the fated accomplishment of the will of *Jupiter*. That fixed economy of the epic poem, with which we are so familiar, and which may at first seem essential to it, does not appear really to exist in the *Iliad* ;—the critical subdivisions or stages are determined in it by critical fancy alone ; the technical episode has no place in it. From the first to the last line of the Poem the whole is *narratio directa*, a straight and onward tale ; and the speeches of *Nestor* and *Phoenix*, and the description of the *Shield of Achilles*, are not parentheses, as they have been commonly called, but parts and acts of

the story itself. They have, it is true, their own beauty or their own usefulness; they charm or they instruct, and either object was sufficient for the desires and manners of the people for whom they were composed.'

We would not be understood as maintaining, that there are not numerous and, in some cases, long interpolations in the *Iliad*. It would be strange if they were not found in a work, which has been exposed to the changes of nearly three thousand years. They are in truth like the moss and ivy clinging to a time-worn structure, at once the effect and the evidence of its antiquity. Notwithstanding, however, such exceptions, we think that every one, unbiassed by system, must be surprised at the unity both of action and sentiment in this first example of epic song; and the fact, that this unity is found in the *Iliad* to such a degree that the exceptions to it are rather blemishes than gross defects, if they are in truth imperfections, and are not perfectly consistent with the true character of the poem, is the main argument in favor of its genuineness. For how is it possible, that the productions of different minds should be collected together, so as to form a whole of, we had almost said, unbroken uniformity in style and sentiment? Where could several minds be elsewhere found, equally successful in portraying character? Look at the characters of the *Iliad*, the vigor with which they are conceived and drawn, observe how their individuality is preserved throughout, and you see the strokes of one and the same matchless pencil. How could even the separate, disconnected productions of the same mind have been wrought into a vast, magnificent epic, which has become the model of all that have succeeded, and which, considered in itself, after making all the deductions which criticism can reasonably ask, bears abundant marks of an original conception?

We are, however, again told, that in maintaining the genuineness of the *Iliad*, we hold to an opinion which implies something beyond the power of human genius. How is it possible, it is asked, that an individual, at so early a period, and under the circumstances which have been mentioned, should have anticipated by many ages the improvement of future times? Unable to conceive that this should have been done, and that a first attempt at this highest species of composition, in an age of comparative rudeness, should in many respects have

succeeded in a degree never surpassed in the subsequent progress of the human mind, will those, who are so incredulous, imagine that they have explained the existence of this poem by either of the two hypotheses, which have been stated? Do they rest satisfied with the belief, that, in reality, it is made up of distinct poems, composed in a later age by several bards, and brought together in the form in which we now possess them; or that it consisted of different poems, most of which were from the individual whose name the work now bears?

For the former hypothesis, we confess that we have little respect. We cannot conceive of any fancy more extravagant, than that the collected minstrelsy of an age should have been moulded into a single poem of such uniformity in style and sentiment, and exhibiting an unity of action so well sustained, as to pass the ordeal of criticism and receive the admiration of mankind through the long period of nearly three thousand years, before any suspicion was expressed, that it was not an original conception of a single mind. As we have already remarked, we would ask any one to look at a single feature of this poem,—the portraiture of character,—and then to maintain, if he can, that this remote age was so much more fruitful than any other, of minds equally endowed with the lofty genius which reigns throughout the *Iliad*.

Nor does the second hypothesis, although free from the extravagance of the other, and more worthy of serious consideration, explain satisfactorily the existence of this poem. How does it remove the alleged difficulty? By advancing in its place a theory, which seems to us yet more incredible. The combining of different poems into one of unbroken unity and interest, is an unheard of achievement. Is there any thing resembling it in the history of mind? Connecting links must be supplied to fill up the interstices. A series of incidents must be interwoven, which shall form a continuous chain from the beginning to the end. The character of the poem, as a whole, should be equally possessed by all the several parts. To effect all this, would require the powers of a second Homer; and who, in the age of the Pisistratidae, could have accomplished this labor? Upon whom had the mantle of the father-minstrel fallen, and enabled him thus to gather the dispersed, decayed relics of a former age, and to mould them into this living form of fair proportions and matchless beauty? But we would ask, if the ancient bard had the power of composing several

rhapsodies, each with its own unity of action, why deny him the power of conceiving and executing a production, which should include many such? How much smaller an advance beyond his contemporaries is implied in the father of history, who conceived and executed the design of a work, earlier unquestionably in the history of prose, than the *Iliad* was in that of poetry? But whatever may be urged respecting the origin of the *Iliad*, its existence will continue to be one of the mysteries of genius. In the words of an author, whose opinion is of great weight on any topic of ancient literature, ‘the creations of genius remain always half miracles. If we were in possession of all the historic testimonies, we never could wholly explain the origin of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; for that origin must have remained, in all essential points, the secret of the poet.’*

The preceding remarks apply with yet more force to the *Odyssey*. The argument in favor of this being the production of an individual, is stronger than in the case of the *Iliad*. The conduct of the *Odyssey* exhibits much more art, and its unity is more entire. In the *Iliad*, our interest is powerfully excited by the separate parts of the poem, and we are in danger of forgetting at times their connexion with the general subject, the honor of Achilles. In the *Odyssey*, we are enchained by the story. Wherever the poet carries us, amidst the most exciting incidents of the poem, the hero is ever before us. Our sympathies are perpetually with him. If the *Iliad*, therefore, is no chance-medley production of many minds, much less so is the *Odyssey*. There are, however, considerations, which make the authorship of the *Odyssey* a subject deserving of a separate discussion. We do not propose to enter into this discussion at the present time. We shall only briefly state the grounds, on which critics have concluded that it was from another hand than that of the author of the *Iliad*.†

There are several points of difference between the two poems. Some words in the *Odyssey*, which do not occur in the *Iliad*, indicate a more advanced state of society. As languages improve, words undergo changes in quantity or form;

* Heeren.

† For the discussion of this subject, we refer the reader to R. P. Knight's *Proleg.* § 43. et seq.; Constant, *de la Religion*, Tome 3. Liv. 8. Mr. Coleridge has given a very good view of the argument in his work.

and many such changes are observed in the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, the chords of the lyre are made of flax, in the *Odyssey*, of the *viscera* of sheep. In the *Odyssey* a superiority can be noticed in the arts of life. The manners of the poem, as must be apparent to a casual reader, differ from those of the *Iliad*. The warrior has hung up his shield and armor in the hall; right and not force prevails; the arts of peace have begun to be cultivated, a change yet more fully developed in the poems of Hesiod, of a still later age. There is, moreover, a marked difference between the poems in their literary character. The *Iliad* abounds in comparisons, in the *Odyssey* there are but few; there is less energy and impetuosity, but more art and refinement. These differences have often been observed, and the explanation which has usually been given of them is, that the *Iliad* was the offspring of the powers of the poet in their youthful vigor, while the *Odyssey* was the feeblér effort of his declining years. Though this explanation may serve to account for some at least, if not all, of these differences, there are others in regard to which it is not perfectly satisfactory. The mythology, the religious system of the *Odyssey*, differs from that of the *Iliad* in some remarkable particulars. Charis is the wife of Vulcan in the *Iliad*, and Venus in the *Odyssey*; Iris is most commonly the messenger of the gods in the former, Mercury in the latter. In the *Iliad*, Hercules is one of the heroes of the preceding age; in the *Odyssey*, he has taken his place among the gods. But in a moral point of view, the religious system of the latter poem far surpasses that of the other. There is less grossness in the character of the deities. Olympus is a fitter residence for the celestials. The quarrels among them, so frequent in the *Iliad*, in the *Odyssey* have almost disappeared. They are more the guardians and the moral governors of men. In the *Iliad*, they are constantly interfering in the conflicts of mortals, with the passions and the frailties of humanity. They inflict blows and receive them in return, they shout, they pursue, they flee. In the *Odyssey* they have become, for the most part, invisible agents. Minerva is almost the only one who appears on the earth, and she acts more by secret inspiration and mysterious influence, than by open intervention. These differences between the two poems are deemed conclusive in favor of the supposition, that the *Odyssey* was from another and a later hand. 'I dare affirm,' says Constant, who is high authority on any question relating to the ancient systems of mythology,

‘that it was as impossible for the Homer of the *Odyssey* to be the author of the *Iliad*, as for a Hebrew of Alexandria to write the *Psalms* or the book of *Job*.’ Mr. Knight comes to the conclusion, that the *Odyssey* belongs to the age which immediately succeeded that of the *Iliad*.

We have thus endeavored to present with clearness and impartiality the principal points involved in the interesting question, respecting the origin of the two great poems ascribed to Homer. We have left many considerations unnoticed, and very probably have allowed less weight to some than they merit in the view of others. However this question may be decided, the decision will not affect the merits of the poems; they must still stand unrivalled among human productions, in the estimation of the true scholar. Bouchardon used to say, that whenever he read Homer, his whole frame seemed to be enlarged, and all nature around him to dwindle into insignificance. We have here doubtless a true test of transcendent genius, in the power which it exerts over all that come within its influence. ‘Of all the Greek poetry,’ says Mr. Coleridge, ‘I, for one, have no hesitation in saying, that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the most delightful and have been the most instructive works to me; there is a freshness about them both which never fades, a truth and sweetness which charmed me as a boy and a youth, and on which, if I attain to it, I count largely for a soothing recreation in my old age.’ Every one, who has imbibed the spirit of the ancient classics, can appreciate these feelings; and when we reflect on the wide sway which Homer has exercised over the minds and hearts of men, we may well ask, what genius was ever more fortunate than ‘the blind old man of Scio’s rocky isle?’ Three thousand years have rolled away, and his music is still borne along the waters to distant shores. Whence comes this influence over minds in every other land and in all succeeding times? He is the only chronicle of his age; and there is a principle within us, which gives an interest and awe to every thing that has come down to us from early days. He exhibits to us the manners of men, in the simplicity of unsophisticated nature. His language has all the freshness of youth; it is the language of pure, unadulterated nature. Add to these qualities a lofty imagination, vigor of conception, and rapidity of action, all set forth by the charm of a versification, matchless for its melody, variety and power, and who will wonder that Homer is the poet of every age and of every land?

We are unwilling to bring this article to a close, without offering some remarks upon the new edition of the *Iliad* by Professor Felton. This gentleman does not claim for his labors the merit of originality. His edition is a reprint of the Leipsig edition of Tauchnitz, which has the reputation in Europe of uncommon accuracy. It is designed, as he informs us, less for the critical scholar, than for the use of students in our literary institutions; and we can safely recommend it as calculated to supply a deficiency, which has been seriously felt by classical instructors. The difficulty has been heretofore, that the attention of the pupil has been too much given to words merely; he has been too little in the habit of studying the characteristic traits of the work on which he is employed, of appreciating its merits, and of entering with interest into its prevailing spirit; for it ought undoubtedly to be one of the primary objects of a liberal education, to inspire and cultivate a taste for the beautiful and true. The labors of commentators, also, have been in general expended on grammatical niceties and the comparison of various readings, to the neglect of the character and spirit of the works which they elucidate, considered as monuments of taste and genius. The object of Mr. Felton is to direct the attention of the student to the *Iliad*, as the noblest monument of ancient inspiration; to make him share the admiration, with which he himself regards it; to induce him, in his own language, 'to read the poem, not in the spirit of a schoolboy conning a dull lesson to be "construed" and "parsed" and forgotten when the hour of recitation is at an end, but in the delightful consciousness, that he is employing his mind upon one of the noblest monuments of the genius of man. Whatever his conclusions may be,' he proceeds, 'as to the merit of particular passages, if any remarks of mine should chance to excite his attention to the real character of the poem, and to promote a habit of analytical criticism, whether his opinions agree with my own or not, the object which I have proposed to myself will be accomplished.' In the execution of his task, Mr. Felton has entirely avoided the fault, into which editors are not unapt to fall, of leaving too little for the pupil to do; and he has equally escaped the strong temptation, of making a cumbrous and unnecessary parade of learning. His notes are brief and appropriate, always in good taste, and wholly free from pedantry. He might perhaps have advantageously extended them; but, in their present form, they are well adapted to his purpose. Indeed, the execution of the

work is in all respects entitled to the highest praise. Its typography is rich and beautiful, and, so far as we have examined, we have found it executed with great accuracy. The illustrations of Flaxman, with which it is adorned, are the production of an artist of uncommon taste and genius, who had spent years in studying the monuments of antiquity, and was animated with the spirit of its best days. They have been welcomed in every country, where Homer continues to be read, with an enthusiasm, which shows that he had caught and reproduced the fervid spirit, alike of the ancient artist and the bard; for painting, like poetry, was only a different development of the same idea of the grand and beautiful. We have no hesitation in saying, that this edition of the *Iliad* is as creditable to the American press, as it is to the taste and learning of its editor. In connexion with the other editions of the classics which have been already published, or are about to appear, it will be received with satisfaction, by the lovers of sound learning, as indicating the commencement of a new era in the classical literature of our country.

ART. IV.—*Old English Romances.*

A Collection of Early Prose Romances. Edited by WILLIAM J. THOMS. 3 Vols. London. 1828.

ONE of the most interesting and instructive walks of literature lies among the graves of the departed,—for the thoughts of man have their graves like man himself, and the reverend monitor, Time, for them likewise tolls the passing bell, and performs the sad obsequies. A vast library is a vast cemetery of mind, where, in a certain sense, lie buried the ideas of those, who have gone before us. Each dusty tome is a neglected monument, whose epitaph is written in the title-page, and whose date not unfrequently records at once the birth and the death of its tenant. There the poet and the philosopher literally mingle their dust together, and the musty apostle of an obsolete creed lies side by side with the prurient ballad-singer. The learned prelate is a prey to the worm, and the wanton tale-bearer lisps his amorous conceits to the dull ear of oblivion. One might almost think, that they had implored eternal peace, and that their prayer had been answered; for no one disturbs their repose, save now and then some Old Mortality,